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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ULAANBAATAR 000437

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DEPT FOR EAP/FO, EAP/CM AND NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [MG](#) [IQ](#)

SUBJECT: US DELEGATION THANKS MONGOLIA FOR ITS CONTINUED  
SUPPORT IN IRAQ

Classified By: DCM Brian L. Goldbeck for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: During a July 22-24 visit to Mongolia, NEA DAS Ambassador Lawrence Butler and Peter McVety, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Director of Coalition Affairs for Iraq and Afghanistan, met July 23 with senior government officials including the President, Foreign Minister, Chief of the General Staff, and Members of the State Great Hural (parliament) to reinforce Mongolia's commitment to its presence in Iraq by emphasizing U.S. appreciation for continuing support as a troop-contributing member of the Iraq coalition. The delegation was warmly received and it offered persuasive arguments encouraging the Mongolian government to continue to commit troops to Iraq coalition operations in the future. END SUMMARY.

"My Nation Is Grateful For Your Sacrifices"

12. (SBU) Throughout their meetings with Government of Mongolia (GOM) officials, DAS Butler and Mr. McVety, accompanied by the Ambassador, TDY Poloff (notetaker) and DATT, stressed the two-pronged purpose of their visit. First, they expressed on behalf of Secretaries Rice and Gates their deep appreciation for Mongolia's contribution to coalition forces in Iraq. Second, they sought to provide an overview of the current situation in Iraq, in advance of the Iraq progress report due to be delivered to Congress in mid-September.

13. (C) The delegation covered in great detail recent events at Camp Echo in Al-Qadisiyah province, where the Mongolia's 100-member contingent provides base security for Polish forces. In recent months, Camp Echo had come under frequent mortar and rocket attacks, but following increased patrolling efforts, these attacks have almost completely ceased. (Note: Concern over these attacks led the Mongolian government to roll-back its planned increase to 136 troops from 100 back to 100 troops as part of the current eighth rotation. End note.)

FM Enkhbold Expresses Caution on Ninth Rotation

14. (SBU) Foreign Minister Enkhbold noted that Mongolia's

support to the United States in Iraq is not part of any quid pro quo. Rather, Mongolia,s support of the coalition is rooted in the philosophy that the country has an obligation to help partners and friends who helped Mongolia when it was in dire straits. But members of the media and the opposition are pressing the government to know what benefit Mongolia has received for its Iraq contributions. Enkhbold expressed his view that at the political level, there is wide support for Mongolian involvement in Iraq. Until recently, the Mongolian public had not been engaged in a debate over its government,s involvement. But in advance of the most recent eighth rotation, members of the public and media had become more active in questioning the rationale for Mongolia,s contribution of troops.

15. (SBU) Enkhbold noted that as long as Mongolians see the situation in Iraq improving, there would be little difficulty in continuing to send troops to Iraq. However, he also admitted that the decision to send the eighth rotation had been very difficult. It was only after President Bush intervened personally with a phone call to President Enkhbayar that the government made the decision to continue its previous levels of support. Enkhbold concluded that it was hard to tell what would happen with a ninth rotation.

16. (SBU) Enkhbold also used the opportunity to remind the U.S. of the importance of concluding the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) compact, as well as his desire to see Presidents Bush and Enkhbayar sign a strategic partnership framework agreement on U.S.-Mongolian relations during Enkhbayar,s visit to Washington in the fall.

#### General Togoo Seeks Expansion of Mongolian Peacekeeping

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17. (SBU) LTG Togoo, Chief of the General Staff, expressed his appreciation that Mongolian troops in Iraq had received the heavy machine guns and other materials requested in advance of their most recent deployment. Additionally, he was pleased to hear from McVety that financial reimbursements for the sixth and seventh rotations would arrive by early August. Togoo stated that he had given a report to Parliament prior to the decision to deploy an eighth rotation, and that updates from CENTCOM, OSD, and from sources on the ground in Iraq were critical to the Mongolian government,s decision making and future planning.

18. (C) Togoo asked a number of questions of the delegation. Topics of discussion included the expected timing of the transfer of Al-Qadisiyah province to Iraqi authority, anticipated changes to the structure of Polish forces, the mechanics of casualty evacuation for Mongolian soldiers, and the status of the MCA compact. He also expressed his concern that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find sufficient numbers of qualified English speakers in the officer and enlisted ranks to participate in Iraq rotations and other UN missions. He asked that a program for providing American English instructors to the Mongolian military be resurrected.

19. (SBU) Finally, Togoo stated that the U.N. mission in Sierra Leone (250 Mongolian soldiers are currently providing security to the Special Court) was slated to end in 2008, and asked for U.S. assistance in working with the U.N. to highlight Mongolian willingness and ability to participate in other U.N. peacekeeping operations.

#### President Enkhbayar Laments Mongolian Oil Dependence

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110. (U) President Enkhbayar expressed his appreciation for the delegation,s visit, and noted that Mongolia, as a new democracy, should be proud to be assisting another country now undergoing a similar transition. While acknowledging that

there have been recent difficulties in maintaining public support for the Iraq deployments, Enkhbayar cited the government's efforts to convince soldiers and officers that their services are highly valued. He also mentioned that he has personally greeted each of the previous seven rotations when they returned from Iraq.

¶11. (SBU) Enkhbayar also noted that Mongolia's large neighbors, Russia and China, have both implied that they are unhappy about Mongolia's involvement in Iraq. He lamented the fact that Mongolia receives 99 percent of its processed oil imports from Russia. He mentioned that the Emir of Kuwait would soon visit Mongolia, and he expressed his hope that Mongolia's other allies, including the U.S., European Union, Korea, and Japan could help to lessen Mongolia's dependence on Russia and China for fuels and lubricants.

#### Parliamentarians Discuss Public Opinion

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¶12. (U) During a lunch hosted by Ambassador Minton, four members of the National Security Committee of the State Great Hural (parliament) took the opportunity to share their views and opinions with the delegation.

¶13. (SBU) When the discussion turned to public opinion of Mongolian involvement in Iraq, one MP cautioned that while he believes Mongolian involvement in Iraq is necessary, there will have to be an end date for such support. A few MPs questioned whether parliament and the government had done enough to educate the public on the potential dangers of the Iraq deployment. The Mongolian Armed Forces have not suffered a single casualty since the end of the Second World War, and there is concern that public opinion could turn dramatically against Mongolian involvement if a serious injury or death(s) were to take place. The consensus around the table was that the public must be made aware of the risks, and one suggestion was for the opposition to question the Prime

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Minister on this issue. (Comment: Although all the MPs present recognized the need to inform the public, none seemed particularly willing to take the initiative to begin a public debate on casualties. End Comment.)

¶14. (U) MPs lamented the fact that there was a public perception of a linkage between Mongolian support for the United States in Iraq and progress toward finalizing the MCA compact. The MPs also sought the latest information on the status of the MCA compact; all expressed hope that it would be concluded soon. The event ended with a brief discussion of visa issues, and the MPs hoped that more tourist and educational visas to the United States would be made available.

#### Media Coverage

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¶15. (U) A number of print and television outlets covered the visit. As is often the case here, Mongolian news sources provided little analysis and simply reported on the presence of the American delegation and its meetings with the President and other officials.

#### Comment

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¶15. (C) Amb. Butler's and Mr. McVety's message of appreciation for Mongolia's coalition commitments was very well received by President Enkhbayar, senior members of the government and Members of Parliament. Although all political leaders expressed their support for the Iraq mission, recent experience with the eighth rotation demonstrates the potential for rising public opposition to the continuing presence of Mongolian troops in Iraq. The death or serious injury of a Mongolian soldier may force the issue to the

fore. Given that the eighth rotation was only secured following a phone call by President Bush, similar or even greater pressure will likely have to be exerted to secure a ninth rotation. An ideal opportunity for such a pitch will present itself during President Enkhbayar,s visit to Washington at the invitation of President Bush in the fall.  
END COMMENT.

116. (U) This cable has been cleared by Ambassador Butler and Mr. McVety.  
MINTON